Population

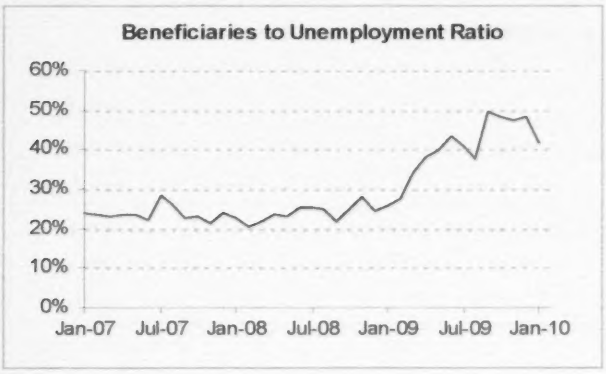
Population growth slowed in 2009…

Alberta's population was estimated at 3,711,845 as of January 1, 2010. This represents a growth of 0.21% in the fourth quarter of 2009, despite a net outflow of 2,780 people from interprovincial migration, the second consecutive quarterly loss and the highest since 1988. Compared to a year earlier, population in Alberta was 1.9% higher. While this was significantly slower than the 2.7% growth recorded in 2008, it was the strongest among provinces and well above the Canadian average of 1.2%.

Employment Insurance

Number of EI recipients on the decline…

In January, 57,590 Albertans received regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, representing a monthly decline of nearly 15%. While Alberta's labour market has stabilized in recent months, some of the decline in the number of EI recipients may be due to the exhaustion of benefits for workers who are still not able to find work. Due to the economic downturn and consequent employment losses, the number of beneficiaries more than quadrupled between October 2008 and October 2009. Despite three consecutive months of improvement since then, the number of beneficiaries was still significantly higher than their pre-recession lows. The proportion of people who are unemployed and receiving EI benefits decreased to 41.3% in January 2010, after reaching a high of nearly 50% in September 2009.



Land Sales

Alberta cracks the billion-dollar mark…

Alberta crossed the billion-dollar mark in land sales revenue (petroleum and natural gas only) for the first time since the 2006-07 fiscal year. Land sales revenue totaled over $1.1 billion for the 2009-10 fiscal year, the highest since 2005-06, when the province collected $2.2 billion. Total revenue exceeded the figure of around $840 million that was originally budgeted.

Canadian Dollar (US¢/C$)	
March 26, 2010	97.23
March 19, 2010	98.16
2009-10 YTD	91.88
WTI Oil US$/bbl	
March 25, 2010	$ 80.53
March 18, 2010	$ 82.20
2009-10 YTD	$ 70.52
Nymex Natural Gas C$/MMBtu*	
Near-month Contract	
March 26, 2010	$ 4.06
March 19, 2010	$ 4.16

*Estimate based on Nymex Futures Market Price

Business Sentiment and Leading Indicator

Indicators signal continuation of recovery…

The *ATB Financial Business Sentiments Index* for the second quarter of 2010 was at its highest level since the third quarter of 2007, reflecting the continued optimism of entrepreneurs in Alberta as the economy emerges from the downturn. Similarly, the Canadian composite *leading indicators index*, which is a broad measure of emerging economic trends, rose by 0.8% in February, with household demand leading the growth.

Monetary Policy

Carney and Bernanke in different moods…

The Bank of Canada modified its 11-month-old promise to leave borrowing rates at a record low until the end of June by adding one word: The pledge is now "expressly" conditional on the outlook for inflation. This was after core inflation touched 2.1% in February, a rate that the Bank wasn't expecting until the second half of 2011. While Mr. Carney agreed that some of the increase may be linked to "transitory factors" (such as a surge in hotel costs due to the Vancouver Olympics), he also believed a "higher level of economic activity" was playing a role.

Meanwhile, the mood remained passive south of the border, as the Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke maintained the low-rate mantra, saying that the US economy "continues to require the support of accommodative monetary policies", citing the still-fragile economic conditions and low inflation.

Current Economic Indicators

Population	2008	2009	2010YTD*	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Population[1] (000's) (level)	3,596	3,688	3,708	–	–	3,704	–	–	3,712	–
% change	2.4	2.6	2.1	–	–	2.3	–	–	1.9	–
Net Interprovincial Migraton[1] (level)	15,317	23,006	-5,315	–	–	-2,535	–	–	-2,780	–
Net International Migration[1] (level)	20,039	20,074	12,696	–	–	7,976	–	–	4,720	–
Net Non-permanent Residents[1] (level)	18,536	19,058	1,014	–	–	2,439	–	–	-1,425	–
Labour Market										
Employment (000's)	2,013	1,988	1,980	1,975	1,985	1,975	1,988	1,995	1,988	1,973
% change	2.8	-1.3	-1.3	-1.6	-1.9	-3.4	-2.3	-1.0	-1.6	-1.0
Unemployment Rate (%)	3.6	6.6	6.8	7.3	6.8	7.2	7.1	6.6	6.6	6.9
Participation Rate (%)	74.7	74.3	73.2	74.1	73.9	73.7	74.0	73.8	73.4	73.0
Average Weekly Earnings[2] ($)	923.21	951.18	–	934.48	952.64	949.74	962.54	959.40	–	–
% change	6.0	3.0	–	1.2	0.6	2.0	0.9	1.2	–	–
Price Indices										
Consumer Price Index	3.1	-0.1	1.3	-1.7	-1.1	0.1	0.8	0.6	1.7	1.0
Excluding food and energy	2.1	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.8	1.0	0.7	1.1	1.3
Non-Res. Const. Cost Index[3] (quarterly)	13.2	-9.8	–	–	-14.8	–	–	-11.2	–	–
Farm Product Price Index	11.5	-11.3*	–	-18.0	-19.8	-20.2	–	–	–	–
Crops	26.7	-22.9*	–	-25.3	-21.9	-24.1	–	–	–	–
Livestock	2.1	-0.8*	–	-15.4	-13.1	-14.0	–	–	–	–
Household Sector										
Housing Starts (SAAR, 000's)	29.2	20.0	25.4	20.7	24.6	29.9	30.1	27.3	23.5	27.3
% change	-39.6	-31.7	85.4	-8.0	-0.4	19.6	46.1	52.5	50.6	131.4
New Housing Price Index	0.7	-9.0	-3.6	-8.9	-8.9	-7.9	-7.1	-6.3	-3.6	–
Edmonton	1.0	-11.2	-6.5	-11.4	-11.4	-10.1	-9.8	-9.4	-6.5	–
Calgary	0.6	-6.7	-0.6	-6.3	-6.4	-5.6	-4.2	-3.1	-0.6	–
MLS Average Resale Prices ($ 000's)	352.9	341.2	345.9	343.1	353.5	359.6	356.4	355.5	344.3	347.6
% change	-0.9	-3.3	5.8	0.0	1.4	2.6	3.4	7.5	6.4	5.1
Edmonton	330.8	319.1	324.3	310.5	337.1	343.1	335.6	333.4	322.7	326.0
% change	-2.0	-3.5	-0.9	-3.3	0.7	0.4	0	2.6	-0.7	2.6
Calgary	401.1	384.3	390.5	392.3	397.8	398.3	405.6	400.3	386.4	394.7
% change	-2.9	-4.2	5.3	-0.4	1.1	2.9	4.4	8.8	5.5	5.2
Retail Sales	-0.1	-8.4	0.3	-10.1	-8.8	-6.5	-6.8	1.4	0.3	–
New Motor Vehicle Sales	-7.3	-21.5	-4.1	-20.6	-15.6	-13.3	-21.3	3.2	-4.1	–
Consumer Bankruptcies	6,066	9,986	–	882	1,163	690	686	634	–	–
% change	27.2	64.6	–	71.6	121.1	9.2	15.3	4.6	–	–
Business Sector										
Rigs Drilling	236	128	313	97	111	129	152	227	287	339
% change	-2.1	-45.6	25.0	-62.7	-54.1	-50.9	-35.6	-3.8	9.3	42.3
Goods Exports (customs based)	34.6	-39.2*	–	-42.6	-40.3	-39.6	–	–	–	–
Energy	42.5	-44.1*	–	-45.1	-42.3	-41.3	–	–	–	–
Agriculture	32.0	-7.4*	–	-9.3	-23.8	-23.8	–	–	–	–
Total Farm Cash Receipts (quarterly)	17.2	-6.7*	–	–	-16.1	–	–	–	–	–
Manufacturing Shipments	7.0	-21.5	0.2	-25.9	-29.3	-23.6	-12.1	-3.0	0.2	–
Wholesale Trade	10.9	-14.2	-9.9	-22.5	-20.3	-24.1	-17.1	-11.8	-9.9	–
Building Permits	-16.5	-14.2	31.7	-5.0	-5.0	76.9	8.3	57.0	31.7	–
Residential	-31.5	-11.8	156.4	44.4	44.7	53.4	50.6	57.1	156.4	–
Non-residential	3.7	-16.3	-26.5	-46.6	-43.9	101.3	-19.7	56.9	-26.5	–
Business Bankruptcies	447	405.0	–	33	35	33	32	32	–	–
% change	-0.4	-9.4	–	-13.2	9.4	-5.7	-28.9	6.7	–	–

Government of Alberta ■
Finance and Enterprise

Alberta

* YTD – year-to-date represents the change since the beginning of the year compared to the same period in the previous year.

[1] Quarterly; annual numbers are presented on a census year basis (July 1 - June 30).

[2] The average weekly earnings series was extensively revised on March 31, 2009 and is no longer comparable with numbers in previous Bulletins.

[3] Average of Calgary and Edmonton.

Sources: All data is from Statistics Canada except Housing Starts (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation), MLS Average Resale Prices (Canadian Real Estate Association), Rigs Drilling (Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors) and Bankruptcies (Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada).

Current Economic Indicators by Province